

# **Draft Finding of No Significant Impact:**

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# **Chapter 1. Finding of No Significant Impact**

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## **1.1. August 2012 Oil and Gas Lease Sale**

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0009-EA

### **Introduction**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Uncompahgre Field Office prepared an environmental assessment (DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0009-EA) that analyzed the effects of the proposed lease sale of up to 22 parcels (29,365.800 acres) located in Gunnison and Delta Counties for the August 2012 Oil and Gas lease sale. The Environmental Assessment considered a range of alternatives including the Proposed Action, Preferred Alternative, and No Action.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the proposed August 2012 oil and gas lease sale (DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0009-EA), dated March 2012. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, I have determined that the Preferred Alternative (Selected Alternative), with the mitigation measures identified in the EA, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. I have also considered the Council on Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA:

#### **1.2. Context:**

The preferred alternative is a site-specific action directly involving the lease of approximately 24,324.050 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The preferred alternative is in an area of the Uncompahgre Field Office where residential developments around the communities of Paonia, Hotchkiss, Crawford, and Delta have been growing in population. In addition, the economic activity is mainly coal mining, oil and gas development, livestock grazing, farm agriculture, recreation and residential development.

#### **1.3. Intensity:**

##### **1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**

Future development of the lease parcels may have minor indirect, short term impacts to resources (i.e. soils, vegetation, and wildlife) as described in Chapter 3 of the EA; however these impacts are not expected to be significant with the incorporation of mitigation and will be further analyzed in site specific NEPA documents at the development stage.

##### **2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.**

The proposed action is not expected to significantly impact public health and safety. The effects of oil and gas leasing are well known and documented. Chapter 3 of the EA analyzes the effects to air and water quality which are not expected to be significant with the

incorporation of mitigation measures. Oil and gas development is a common practice in the area and no significant impacts to health and safety are known.

3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

As shown in Chapter 3 of the EA, impacts to historic and cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas were all considered when analyzing the Preferred Alternative. As described in the EA, surveys for cultural resources prior to any development would avoid impacts to cultural and historical resources.

The following components of the Human Environment and resource issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area: park lands, prime farmlands, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

Wetlands are present in the project area, however as described in section 3.3.12 of the EA, there are no comprehensive lentic wetland inventories or documented lentic wetlands on the parcels. As described in section 3.3.2 of the EA, a segment of Deep Creek, which crosses a parcel on private land, is eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. There would not be significant impacts because of the mitigation measures designed to protect segment eligibility and potential classification.

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.**

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial, oil and gas leasing has been occurring in an area primarily north and west of Paonia reservoir state park and in the general area, the effects of oil and gas leasing are generally well understood. In addition, mitigation measures as described in Chapter 3 of EA and incorporated into the selected action will reduce anticipated impacts.

5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**

The BLM's Colorado State Office conducts quarterly competitive lease sales to sell available oil and gas lease parcels. Effects associated with leasing are well known and documented. Oil and gas leasing has been occurring in the area primarily north and west of the Paonia reservoir state park and the effects are generally well understood. NEPA documents at the development stage will incorporate all new information to analyze site-specific impacts.

6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The preferred alternative is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The selected alternative was considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 3 of the EA.

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the selected alternative is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

The selected alternative will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory would be completed before any development and/or consultation with SHPO would be completed in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and on cultural resources.

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.**

Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to listed species have been incorporated into the preferred alternative. All parcels would be subject to CO-34 to alert the lessee of potential habitat for threatened endangered, candidate or other special status plant or animal.

To reduce the potential environmental effects to Bald Eagles if development were to occur, stipulation UB-03 would be applied to parcels (6189, 6190, 6193, 6198, 6202, 6205, 6206, 6207); also lease notice UFO-LN-14 applies to Bald Eagle Winter Roost sites.

10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

The selected alternative does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to interested publics and Native American tribes. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs (as described in section 1.4 of the EA).

## 1.4. Signed:

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*This is an unsigned FONSI for  
public comment*

[Date]